

Representations of Glass Objects as a Source on
Byzantine Glass: How Useful Are They?

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IN A RECENT VOLUME dedicated to the history of table culture in central Europe, there is an illustration that aims to highlight the usefulness of western religious art in the study of tableware. In this illustration the objects depicted on the table in a fifteenth-century painting of the Last Supper—which, incidentally, include two glass prunted beakers—are shown to mirror actual artifacts attested in the archaeological record. According to the authors, western religious art provides invaluable information not only on the typology of the articles represented but also on the continuous use of certain forms over long periods of time.¹ Medievalists interested in the study of daily life and material culture in central and western Europe have been trying, in fact, to systematize recourse to the artistic evidence by creating comprehensive photographic archives and compiling databases in which the various types of artifacts represented in the paintings are recorded.² This effort to classify and quantify the artistic evidence has triggered a wide-ranging inquiry into the reliability of western art as a source on medieval material culture and daily life in general and the methodological issues involved in employing pictorial data in

¹ A. Morel et al., *Der gedeckte Tisch: Zur Geschichte der Tafelkultur* (Zurich, 2001), 36–37.

frühen Neuzeit, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, <http://www.imareal.oewa.ac.at/> (accessed 3 March 2003).

² For example, the photographic archive of the Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der

particular.³ The ensuing discussion emphasizes that the “realism” of late medieval and early modern western art should not be taken for granted and that the uncritical use of images may lead to misguided conclusions. Scholars have pointed out that paintings cannot be used with confidence in reconstructing the typology, chronological sequence, or distribution map of particular artifact categories without first addressing questions concerning the potential use of iconographic formulas, the imitation of pictorial models, the availability of pattern books, and the dissemination of popular artistic types over wide geographic regions.⁴ Artistic imagination has emerged as an additional factor that needs to be taken into consideration when establishing typologies, especially in the case of depicted artifacts for which no confirmatory archaeological evidence is available.

Equally important are observations concerning the use of images in determining the function and the cultural and social context of the use of particular artifacts. Scholars have noted that, especially in the case of late medieval art, which was predominantly religious in content, dress and elements of the setting were often imbued with symbolic significance.⁵ Their introduction into particular pictorial contexts and their occurrence in certain combinations were often dictated by the need to convey the dogmatic and moralistic message of the image in comprehensible visual terms, by artistic convention, and by the intentions of the patron and the artist; a desire to be “realistic” *per se* and a fascination with the surrounding material world appear to have been secondary motives in the process.⁶ As a result, although a number of the individual components of the setting may be “true-to-life,” the whole is not necessarily so.⁷

Any historian, art historian, or archaeologist who has ever tried to use Byzantine art as a source of information on Byzantine material culture and daily life affirms that many of the problems of interpretation described as relevant to western art are also germane to the visual material he or she has to contend with. However, compared to developments in western studies, in-depth methodological discussion of Byzantine art as a source on everyday life in medieval Byzantium is still in its infancy.⁸ By contrast to western medieval art, “realism” in the rendering of dress and paraphernalia was never considered a distinctive feature of Byzantine painting. On the contrary, Byzantine art historians commonly highlight the indifference of Byzantine art toward the faithful representation of the trappings of the material world and its penchant for the repetition of iconographic types sanctified by centuries-long tradition. Because of these two acknowledged traits, skeptical Byzantinists have exploited only rarely the impressive corpus of Byzantine religious painting in their investigation of Byzantine material culture.⁹ Yet, however incidental the recourse to the artistic evidence might have been until recently, the studies that did use it have shown—by means of comparisons with extant artifacts, the consideration of the written evidence, and the judicious use of ethnographic material—that contemporary artifacts were indeed reflected in Byzantine religious art. It is true that the faithful representation of the surrounding world was avoided, since temporal and spatial specificity would have detracted from the transcendental character of the religious image and compromised the universality of its message. Nonetheless, as a recent systematic investigation has demonstrated, contemporary artifacts were depicted side by side with fanciful and conventional types in the same monument or even in the same iconographic context throughout the long history of Byzantine art.¹⁰ As was often true of western art, so in the case of Byzantine images: although the setting as a whole

3 See, among others, E. Vavra, “Kunstwerke als Quellenmaterial der Sachkulturforschung,” in *Europäische Sachkultur des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 1980), 195–232; J.-P. Sosson, ed., *Documents iconographiques et culture matérielle* (Brussels, 1985); idem, “Les images et la culture matérielle au bas moyen-âge,” in *Mensch und Objekt im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit: Leben, Alltag, Kultur*, ed. G. Jaritz (Vienna, 1990), 345–64; G. Jaritz, ed., *Pictura quasi Fictura: Die Rolle des Bildes in der Erforschung von Alltag und Sachkultur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna, 1996); P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001), 81–94, 96–102.

4 See, for example, P. M. Vêche, “Apport de la peinture de chevalet des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux aux XVe et XVIe siècles à l’étude de la céramique usuelle: L’expérience de la photothèque du Centre belge d’histoire rurale,” in *Documents iconographiques*, 84–90, 91–92.

5 See H. Kühnel, “Abbild und Sinnbild in der Malerei des Spätmittelalters,” in *Europäische Sachkultur*, 83–100.

6 Cf. K. Moxey, “Reading the ‘Reality Effect,’” in *Pictura quasi Fictura*, 15–21.

7 Cf. Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 102: “So far as the history of material culture is concerned, the testimony of images seems to be most reliable in the small details.”

8 I. Spatharakis, “Observations on a Few Illuminations in Ps.-Oppian’s *Cynegetica* Ms. at Venice,” *Thesaurismata* 17 (1980): 22–35; A. Bryer, “Byzantine Agricultural Implements: The Evidence of Medieval Illustrations of Hesiod’s ‘Works and Days,’” *BSA* 81 (1986): esp. 50–66; P. Kalamara, *Le système vestimentaire à Byzance du IVe jusqu’ à la fin du XIe siècle*, Thèse à la carte (Lille, 1997), 10–15; M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* (Leiden, 2003); eadem, “Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography,” in *Proceedings of the Conference on Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400–1453)*, Cambridge, September 8–10, 2001, ed. M. Grünbart et al. (forthcoming).

was “timeless” and unrealistic, certain of its constituent elements did refer to contemporary reality at the time of the creation of the artistic works. Still, Byzantine art does not offer a complete record of the artifact types in use in the empire at any given period and this should always be kept in mind when using the visual evidence to reconstruct material culture, especially those aspects of it for which little archaeological evidence survives.¹¹

The reason why certain artifacts or artifact categories were treated in a “realistic” manner by Byzantine artists while others were not is a complicated question with no single, all-embracing answer. Each instance should be examined separately, in relation to its artistic and historical context. Iconographic necessity and the semiotic potential of the objects concerned; popular religious beliefs that conditioned expectations to see particular attributes associated with particular saintly figures; topical concerns that informed the Byzantines’ visualization of sacred history; current historical conditions, cultural tastes, and stylistic trends that affected what should be depicted and how; the impact of non-Byzantine artistic practices; the personality of the patrons and their intentions in commissioning a particular work; the working practices of the artists, their skills, powers of observation, and the models to which they had recourse; all these factors determined not only the introduction of depictions of contemporary artifacts into Byzantine pictorial contexts but also the accuracy with which the objects were rendered. A genuine interest in the observation and depiction of the sensible world appears to have been far less influential in the process.¹² An enquiry into the motivation and creative sources of “realism” in the depiction of particular types of artifacts is therefore a prerequisite for evaluating critically the pictorial evidence and using it successfully in answering questions concerning the typology, chronological sequence, geographical distribution, and function of specific artifacts and artifact categories.

9 See, for example, A. Orlando, “Παραστάσεις ἐργαλείων τινῶν ξυλουργοῦ, μαρμαρογλύπτου καὶ κτίστου ἐπὶ παλαιοχριστιανικῶν καὶ βυζαντινῶν μνημείων,” in *Πεπραγμένα τοῦ Θ' Διεθνοῦ Βυζαντινολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου*, ed. S. Kyriakides, A. Xyngopoulos, and P. Zepos (Athens, 1955), 1:329–39; W. H. Rutt de Collenberg, “Le ‘thorakion’: Recherches iconographiques,” *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome: Moyen Âge–Temps Modernes* 83 (1971): 263–361; G. Vikan and J. Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium: Locking, Sealing, and Weighing* (Washington D.C., 1980); L. Bouras, “Byzantine Lighting Devices,” *JÖB* 32.3 (1981): 479–91; T. Koliás, *Byzantinische Waffen: Ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Waffenkunde von den Anfängen bis zur Lateinischen Eroberung* (Vienna, 1988); Ch. Bakirtzes, *Bυζαντινά τουναλολάγηνα* (Athens, 1989); F. de’ Maffei, “Gli strumenti musicali a Bisanzio,” in *Da Bisanzio a San Marco: Musica e Liturgia*, ed. G. Cattin (Venice, 1997), 61–110; A. Libere, “Βυζαντινά γεωργικά εργαλεία καὶ μηχανές,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Ετ.*

21 (2000): 275–85. Recourse to the artistic evidence provided by Byzantinizing painting in the medieval states of Serbia and Bulgaria for the study of Serbian and Bulgarian material culture has been relatively more systematic; see, for example, V. Han, “Profani namještaj na našoj srednjovjekovnoj fresci,” *Muzej Primjenjene Umetnosti, Zbornik* 1 (1955): 7–52; G. A. Škrinavić, *Oružje u srednjovjekovnoj Srbiji, Bosni i Dubrovniku* (Belgrade, 1957); I. Djordjević, “Predstave pribora za pisanje i opremu knjige u srpskom srednjovjekovnom slikarstvu,” in *Zbornik Vladimira Mošina*, ed. D. Bogdanović et al. (Belgrade, 1977), 87–112; R. Pejović, *Predstave muzičkih instrumenata u srednjovjekovnoj Srbiji* (Belgrade, 1984); E. Manova, “Les armes défensives au moyen âge d’après les peintures murales de la Bulgarie du sud-ouest aux XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles,” *BBulg* 3 (1969): 187–223.

10 Parani, *Reconstructing*, passim (n. 8 above).

11 The depiction of tableware is a particularly illuminating case, since its relatively limited repertoire, particularly down to the late 11th century, does not reflect the variety of vessels and utensils that were actually used in medieval Byzantium and that are well attested in the archaeological and the written records; see Parani, “Byzantine Material Culture” (n. 8 above).

12 See above and Parani, *Reconstructing*, esp. chap. 6.

The Use of Artistic Evidence in the Study of Byzantine Glass

With these introductory observations in mind one may now turn to examine the potential of using Byzantine painting as a source in the study of Byzantine glass.¹³ This approach was first explored in a systematic way by Astone Gasparetto in an article of 1975 as part of an attempt to compensate for the dearth of archaeological evidence at that time by examining alternative sources of information.¹⁴ Given the exploratory nature of his study, he limited himself to the survey of a small group of ninth- to sixteenth-century manuscripts housed in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma and the Biblioteca Marciana and the library of the Greek Institute in Venice. Gasparetto was quick to point out the methodological limitations of using the artistic evidence in reconstructing a typology of Byzantine glass—limitations that stem mainly from the reproduction of earlier iconographic types by Byzantine miniaturists. However, the careful examination of individual miniatures and comparisons between the depicted ink bottles, bottles, and beakers on the one hand and extant artifacts on the other suggested that, on occasion, contemporary forms were indeed reflected in the miniatures. Gasparetto therefore concluded that a comprehensive survey of Byzantine miniature painting to determine what is conventional and what is realistic in the representation of glass objects would be worthwhile.¹⁵

As far as I know, a systematic study of the sort envisioned by Gasparetto was never realized. However, today conditions are ripe for a reexamination of the value of the artistic evidence for Byzantine glass studies. Continuing publication has ensured access to a much larger sample of Byzantine paintings than was available three decades ago, while new archaeological evidence has significantly enlarged the corpus of material against which artistic representations may be controlled. Moreover, recent art-historical studies have enhanced our understanding of the creative processes of religious iconography. As pointed out above, such an understanding is essential for the judicious appraisal of the visual evidence. Furthermore, it enables the researcher to ask of the pictorial evidence more sophisticated questions that go beyond issues of typology, chronology, and function, to questions related to the popularity of glass as a material and to the social context of the use of glass objects in Byzantium.

The glass vessels represented in Byzantine painting are usually characterized by their light blue color and by the telltale semblance of transparency that was achieved by rendering the lower part of the illustrated object in a different color (fig. 1). Representations of opaque glass are far more difficult to identify, especially in the case of objects rendered in light blue or grayish white, since these may represent vessels made of silver rather than glass. In some examples, such as the two bottles in the Birth of the Virgin in the church of Sts. Joachim and Anna at Studenica (1314), the shape of the vessels alone might be a sufficient indication that the illustrated examples are made of glass.¹⁶ In other cases, however, given that actual glass objects could on occasion imitate the design of more expensive vessels made of silver, identification becomes more problematic.¹⁷ As for decoration, glass vessels are, as a rule, represented plain, even though glass finds from Byzantine sites evidence great variety in ornamentation, including ribbing, the application of colored trails, gilding, and enameling.¹⁸ Although in some instances this plainness may be a function of the small scale of the representations, in most cases it seems that elaboration was simply considered unnecessary from a semiotic point of view.

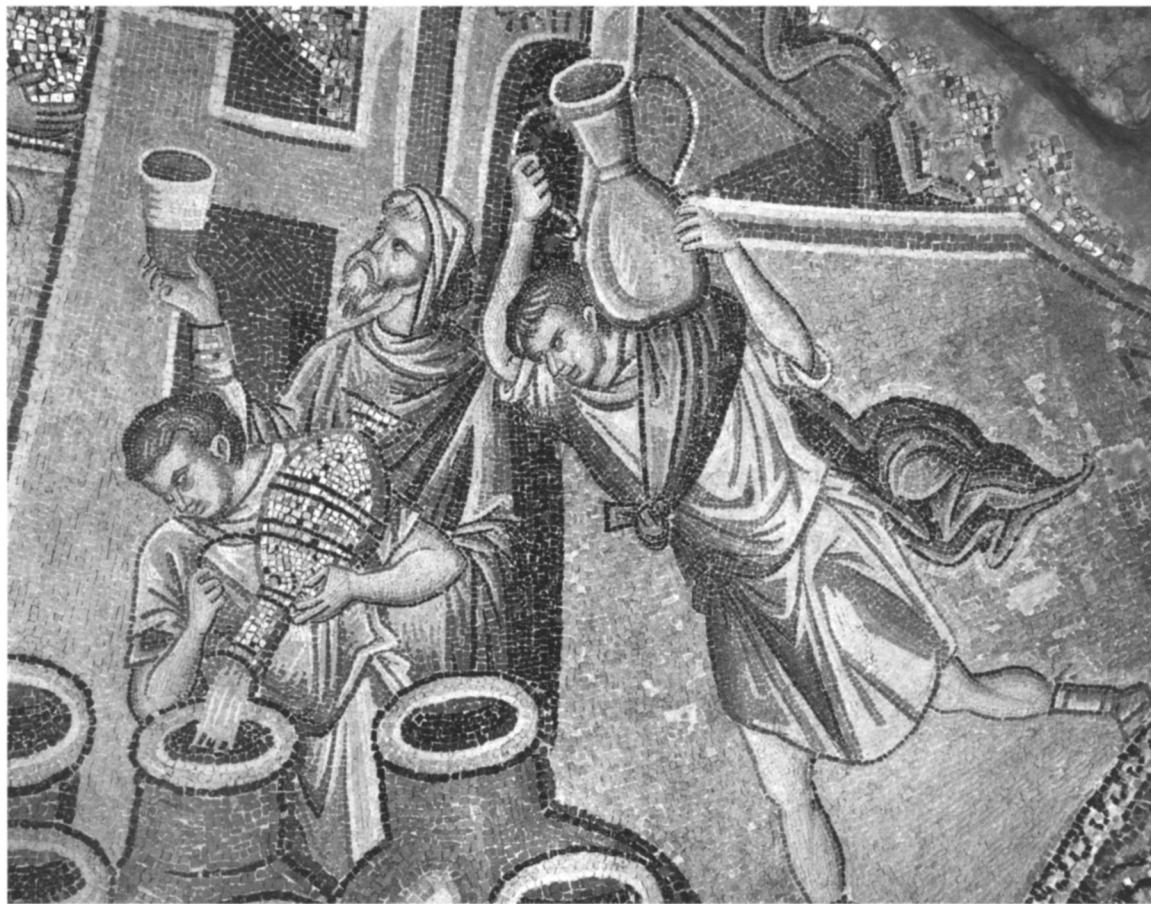
¹³ For an overview of glass production in medieval Byzantium and the various shapes of glass vessels in use, see J. Henderson and M. M. Mango, "Glass at Medieval Constantinople: Preliminary Scientific Evidence," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland: Papers from the Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, April 1993*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron, with the assistance of G. Greatrex (Aldershot, 1995), 333–56; V. François and J.-M. Spieser, "Pottery and Glass in Byzantium," in *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. Laiou et al. (Washington, D.C., 2002), 594–98.

¹⁴ "Note sulla vetraria e sull'iconografia vetraria bizantina," *JGS* 17 (1975): 101–13. For an earlier, brief general discussion of Byzantine art as a source on Byzantine glass, see J. Philippe, *Le monde byzantin dans l'histoire de la verrerie (Ve–XVI^e siècle)* (Bologna, 1970), 13–14. On the use of artistic evidence in the study of western European glass, see W. P. McCray, *Glassmaking in Renaissance Venice: The Fragile Craft* (Aldershot, 1999), 6 (with additional bibliographical references).

¹⁵ Even before Gasparetto's article was published, scholars involved in the study of glass production and use in the central Balkans did employ representations in Byzantinizing mural paintings to supplement the archaeological evidence; see, for example, L. J. Kojić and M. Wenzel, "Medieval Glass Found in Yugoslavia," *JGS* 9 (1967): 76–93; V. Han, "Problemi oko porekla i stila srednjovekovnog stakla iz Srbije, Bosne i Hercegovine," *Muzej Primjenjene Umetnosti, Zbornik* 13 (1969): 7–30; eadem, "The Origin and Style of Medieval Glass found in the Central Balkans," *JGS* 17 (1975): 114–26; M. Wenzel, "Analysis of Some Glass from Hercegovina [sic]," in *Srednjovekovno staklo na Balkanu (V–XV vek)* (Belgrade, 1975), 207–9. A bottle type attested in Serbian archaeological sites and distinguished by oblique ribbing on its tall, cylindrical neck was in fact named "Manasija type" after the bottles with the spirally ribbed neck depicted in the wall-paintings of the *katholikon* of the Resava Monastery, also known as Manasija (1407–18), see Han, "Problemi," 25, and "Origin and Style," 119.

As with other artifact categories, only a partial inventory of the glass forms that were used in Byzantium—as we know them mainly from the archaeological record—was reflected in art. The depicted types include lamps, ink bottles and inkwells, medicine bottles, urine flasks, perfume bottles, tableware, and, possibly, glass bracelets.

Fig. 1 Mosaic, Wedding at Cana, detail. Constantinople, Chora monastery, 1315–21 (photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.)



¹⁶ S. Ćirković, V. Korać, G. Babić, *Studenica Monastery* (Belgrade, 1986), fig. 107.

¹⁷ Cf. McCray, *Glassmaking in Venice*, 69–70. A good example is the opaque grayish-white bottle with a cylindrical neck having a bulge at its base and a ribbed, bulbous body depicted in the Birth of the Virgin in the katholikon of the Serbian monastery of Hilandar on Mount Athos (1320–21); see T. Volanake, ed., *HΠαλαιολόγεια ζωγραφική στη Θεσσαλονίκη* (Thessalonike, 1986), fig. 27. Wenzel has used this representation as evidence in her reconstruction of the development of glass bottles with vertically ribbed bodies and neck-bulges in central and western Europe; see “Analysis,” 208–9. However, I believe that it is impossible to determine

the material of the bottle in question. The use of silver serving and drinking vessels is well attested in the written sources; see, for example, J. Bompaire et al., eds., *Actes de Vatopédi* (Paris, 2001), 1:355 (will of Theodore Sarantenos from Berroia, 1325).

¹⁸ See, for example, G. R. Davidson, *The Minor Objects*, vol. 12 of *Corinth* (Princeton, N.J., 1952), nos. 750–54; A. H. S. Megaw, “A Twelfth Century Scent Bottle from Cyprus,” *JGS* 1 (1959): 58–61; idem, “More Gilt and Enamelled Glass from Cyprus,” *JGS* 10 (1968): 88–104; J. W. Hayes, *Excavations at Sarachane in Istanbul*, vol. 2, *The Pottery* (Princeton, 1992), 401, 405 (no. 78); M. A. V. Gill, *Amorium Reports: Finds*, vol. 1, *The Glass* (1987–1997), with contributions by C. S. Lightfoot, E. A. Ivison, and

M. T. Wypyski, *BAR International Series* 1070 (Oxford, 2002), 44–46, 60, 142–44, 164.

Bracelets

In eleventh- and twelfth-century pictorial contexts, female figures involved in some kind of manual activity are portrayed with their arms (or part thereof) bare and with two to four dark-colored bracelets around their wrists; an additional two or three bracelets are sometimes shown above the elbow (fig. 2). The material out of which the depicted bracelets were supposedly made is impossible to determine. Nevertheless the manner in which they are shown to be worn and the chronological framework of their occurrence in art suggest that the source of inspiration for these images was the female practice of wearing dark-colored bangles. For the medieval period, this practice is attested in the archaeological record from the tenth to the twelfth or thirteenth century.¹⁹ Some of the examples found at Amorium, Turkey, are wide enough to have been worn on the upper arm as shown in the paintings. Furthermore, as pointed out by Margaret Gill, the abrasion marks observed on the sides of some of the Amorium bracelets indicate that at least some of the plain examples were worn in groups, in all probability in the manner that one finds reflected in art.²⁰ At first glance even the association in the paintings of the bracelets with lower-class women—namely servants, attendants, and midwives—may appear as yet another realistic touch, since actual finds of glass bracelets are often, though not exclusively, associated with poorer female burials.²¹ Still the visual evidence should be used with caution when discussing the social context of the use of glass bracelets: the reason why upper-class women were not portrayed wearing similar adornment was simply that they were never, to my knowledge, depicted with their arms bare, the latter mode of representation being distinctive of female figures involved in manual labor.



¹⁹ See, selectively, Davidson, *Minor Objects*, nos. 2140–62, pls. 112, 113; D. Whitehouse, L. Pilosi, and M. T. Wypyski, “Byzantine Silver Stain,” *JGS* 42 (2000): 93–95; D. Papanikola-Bakirtze, ed., *Καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο: Θεσσαλονίκη, Λευκός Πύργος, Οχτώβριος 2001–Ιανουάριος 2002* (Athens, 2002), nos. 531, 533–36; Gill, *Amorium*, 1:79–98, 183–219.

²⁰ Gill, *Amorium*, 1:79, 184.

²¹ Cf. Papanikola-Bakirtze, ed., *Καθημερινή ζωή*, no. 828.

Fig. 2 Miniature, Birth of St. John the Baptist. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, cod. urb. gr. 2, fol. 167v, dated 1122–42 (copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)



On the other hand, images of women wearing bracelets may provide a starting point for hypothesizing about the causes of the great popularity of glass bangles in the later part of the Middle Byzantine period. The artistic evidence suggests a relationship between a change in the design of the sleeves of female gowns and the fashion of wearing bracelets on the forearm and the upper arm. By the middle of the eleventh century, female dresses acquired sleeves that were exceedingly wide at the wrist.²² Though elegant, such "trumpet-shaped" sleeves would have been particularly cumbersome for women engaged in housework and other manual activities. Middle Byzantine portrayals of servants and midwives reflect the convenient and practical solution to this problem: the lower, pointed ends of the sleeves are pulled back and tied in a knot between the shoulder blades, leaving the arms not only unhampered but also visible (fig. 2: servant preparing the cradle). Perhaps the looseness of the trumpet-shaped sleeves and the ease with which they could slip back from the wrist or be pulled back, thus revealing the arm and its potential adornment, contributed to the popularity of bracelets and armlets, including glass bangles, as female ornaments.

In Late Byzantine portrayals of female servants, who continue to appear with their arms bare as an indication of their low social status and the manual nature of their duties, both the realistic detail of the sleeves tied in a knot and the dark-colored bracelets and armlets are absent (fig. 3).²³ In the Palaiologan period, the trumpet-shaped sleeves appear to have been a less widespread feature of female attire, associated especially with the gala dress of the female members of the upper classes.²⁴ It is again tempting to associate the change in the design of the sleeves with the archaeologically documented decline in popularity of bangles during the Late Byzantine period.

Fig. 3 Mosaic, Birth of the Virgin. Constantinople, Chora monastery, 1315–21 (photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.)

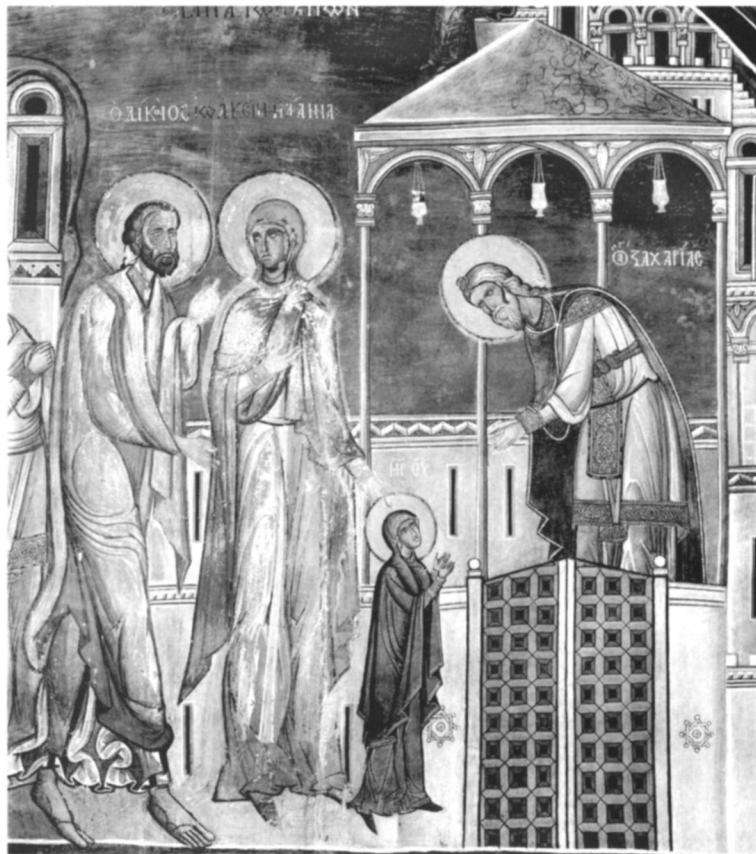
²² Parani, *Reconstructing*, 73–74 (n. 8 above).

²³ See also G. Millet and A. Frolow, *La peinture du Moyen Âge en Yougoslavie (Serbie, Macédoine et Monténégro)*, fasc. 3 (Paris, 1962), pl. 1.2 (Birth of the Virgin at the church of the Peribleptos [St. Clement] in Ohrid, 1294/95).

²⁴ Parani, *Reconstructing*, 74–76.

Lamps

The only type of glass lighting device introduced into Byzantine pictorial contexts was the single hanging lamp, which was represented in a variety of shapes.²⁵ Representations of hanging lamps are commonly associated with depictions of sanctuaries, especially in scenes such as the Presentation of the Virgin or Christ in the Temple and the Communion of the Apostles, where the lamps appear suspended from the canopies of ciboria above the altar table (fig. 4).²⁶ The association of hanging lamps with representations of sanctuaries can be traced back to the art of the Early Byzantine period.²⁷ However, as a rule, the types of lamps depicted in medieval contexts differ from their Early Byzantine counterparts.²⁸



²⁵ For a recent survey of the various types of Byzantine glass lamps, see B. Y. Olcay, "Lighting Methods in the Byzantine Period and Findings of Glass Lamps in Anatolia," *JGS* 43 (2001): 77–87.

Fig. 4 Fresco, Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, detail. Lagoudera, Panagia Arakiotissa, 1192 (photo courtesy of R. Anderson)

²⁶ See also S. Dufrenne, *Illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1966), 1:66, pl. 60 (Bristol Psalter, fol. 259r, 11th c.); M. Restle, *Byzantine Wall Painting in Asia Minor*, trans. I. R. Gibbons (Recklinghausen, 1967), 3: pl. 460 (Sogانlı, Karabağ kilise, 1060/1); I. Sinkević, *The Church of St Panteleimon at Nerezi: Architecture, Programme, Patronage* (Wiesbaden, 2000), fig. XXXIX (1164); C. Grozdanov and L. Haderman-Misguich, *Kurbinovo* (Skopje, 1992), fig. 40 (church of St. George, 1191); G. Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: Matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture*

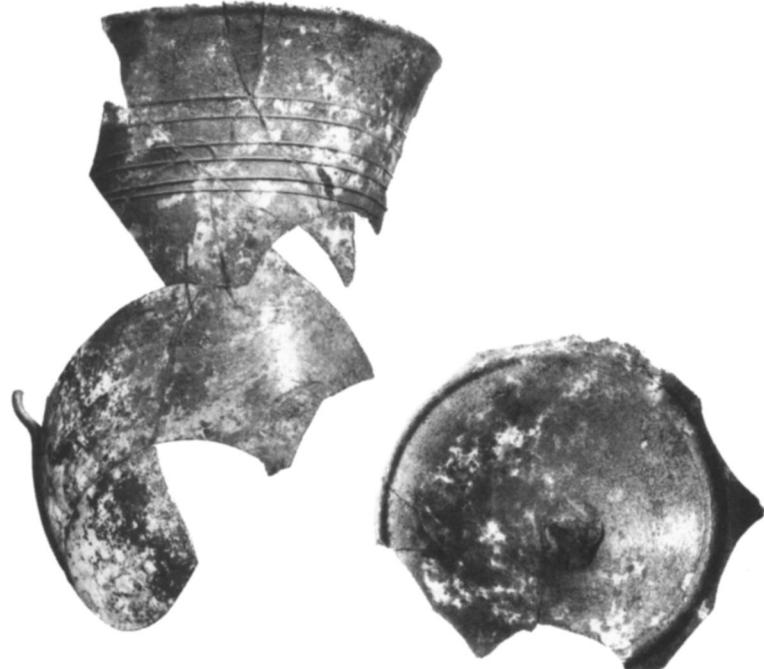
et de la peinture en Grèce au XIVe et XVe siècles (Paris, 1910), pl. 134.3 (church of Hagia Sophia, 1350–65).

²⁷ See, for example, M. M. Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures* (Baltimore, 1986), no. 34, fig. 34.6 (Istanbul, Archaeological Museum: Stuma paten with the Communion of the Apostles, 574–576/78; the lamp on the paten seems to reflect Early Byzantine silver examples).

²⁸ The two hanging lamps that appear on the ivory plaque with St. Menas flanked by camels in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan (late 7th c.?) are similar in profile to some medieval Byzantine representations of glass sanctuary lamps (see K. Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art: Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977–February 12, 1978* [New York, 1979], no. 517). However, because of the medium, it is impossible to say whether the lamps on the ivory were intended to reflect glass or silver examples.

In medieval pictorial contexts, the mode of suspension of the lamps is only rarely indicated. In the Presentation of the Virgin in the temple at Panagia tou Araka, Lagoudera, Cyprus (1192), the lamps of the ciborium appear to be provided with a metal mount on which the rings for suspension would have been attached (fig. 4). This detail was apparently inspired by contemporary practices.²⁹ On the other hand, in the depiction of the same scene in the church of Hagia Sophia at Mistra (1350–65), the lamp of the ciborium is furnished with three handles for suspension. Glass handles attached either to the rim or further down the body of the lamp appear to have been the commonest means for suspension of single hanging glass lamps from the Early Byzantine period onward.³⁰

As to the profile of the lamps associated with images of ciboria, the commonest type is an elongated lamp with a tall flaring neck and a body bulging toward the base, which often displays a foot. Such lamps are already attested in pictorial contexts by the eleventh century, but they continue to be represented until the Late Byzantine period.³¹ A group of glass lamps displaying a comparable profile—though not a foot—was unearthed from a late thirteenth-century Frankish context at Corinth and was associated by the excavators with ecclesiastical lighting and burial rituals (figs. 5, 6).³² I was unable to identify close parallels for this type of lamp from earlier, Middle Byzantine contexts, although hanging lamps with ring or folded base—but with a globular body—are attested in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³³ One wonders whether this lack of comparanda from excavations should be attributed to the fact that the recovered fragments of hanging lamps are often too small to allow a reconstruction of their original profile rather than to the possibility that the painters were reproducing an imaginary or a conventional type. The general similarity in form between the illustrated Byzantine sanctuary lamps and extant medieval Islamic mosque lamps could support the view that Byzantine artists had a specific type of lamp in mind when they produced their images.³⁴



29 Parani, *Reconstructing*, 190, pl. 198 (n. 8 above; Venice, Treasury of San Marco: glass hanging lamp with a silver mount, 11th–12th c.). To my knowledge, openwork metal casings for hanging glass lamps, though attested in the archaeological record, are not reflected in artistic contexts; see

M. M. Mango, “The Significance of Byzantine Tinned Copper Objects,” with scientific contributions by C. Mortimer and P. Northover, in *Θυμάτα: Στη μνήμη της Αλσακαρίνας Μπούρα* (Athens, 1994), 221–27.

30 See Olcay, “Lighting Methods,” 84–86 (n. 25 above); Gill, *Amorium*, 1:35–37, 131–34 (n. 18 above).

31 See above, n. 26.

32 C. K. Williams, II and O. H. Zervos, “Frankish Corinth: 1992,” *Hesperia* 62.1 (1993): 14, 22–25, 30; eidem, “Frankish Corinth: 1995,” *Hesperia* 65.1 (1996): 26.

33 Olcay, “Lighting Methods,” 86, fig. 6h–j.

34 Cf. comments of Lightfoot and Ivison concerning the fragments of three glass vessels recovered from the Lower City Church at Amorium that were identified by Gill as jars, but which have a profile, characterized by a constriction between mouth and body, that is similar to Islamic hanging lamps of the 10th to 12th centuries; Gill, *Amorium*, 1:261. On Islamic hanging lamps see, among others, G. M. Crowfoot and D. B. Harden, “Early Byzantine and Later Glass Lamps,” *JEA* 17 (1931): 205; J. Kröger, *Nishapur: Glass of the Early Islamic Period* (New York, 1995), no. 235; S. Carboni, *Glass from Islamic Lands* (New York, 2001), no. 38b–c; S. Carboni and D. Whitehouse, eds., *Glass of the Sultans* (New York, 2001), no. 113.

Figs. 5–6 Body and base fragments of glass lamp (MF-1992-24, MF-1992-25), late 13th c.; Corinth, Frankish complex excavation (photos by I. Ioannidou and L. Bartziotou, courtesy of American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Corinth Excavations)

Single hanging lamps were also occasionally introduced into portrayals of the evangelists and various ecclesiastical authors in miniature and, to a lesser extent, in monumental painting. The practice of introducing lighting devices in author portraits was also known in the Early Byzantine period.³⁵ However, as with lamps in representations of sanctuaries, the types of lamps associated with saintly authors represented in medieval contexts appear to have been updated in accordance with current fashions. The depicted medieval glass lamps are shaped like bowls or, more rarely, like a cone (fig. 7).³⁶ Bowl-shaped hanging lamps with glass handles for suspension are relatively well attested in the archaeological record.³⁷ On the other hand, the only parallel I was able to find for cone-shaped lamps is a glass hanging lamp in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (fig. 8).³⁸ This example is usually dated to the tenth century, based on a comparison with a lamp depicted in a manuscript now in the British Museum (Add. ms. 28815, fol. 76v), a comparison that, in my view, is not convincing. I believe that the Dumbarton Oaks example is more akin to the lamp depicted in codex 234 of the Pantokrator monastery on Mount Athos (ca. 1150) and should perhaps be ascribed a later date (fig. 7).³⁹

The introduction of lamps both into depictions of sanctuaries and into saintly author portraits served a semiotic function related to the symbolism of light. In the sanctuary, the lamp alluded to the light of life and to salvation through Christ “the light of the world” (John 8:12) and was reminiscent of the “sleepless” lamp that was constantly kept burning in the bema of the church.⁴⁰ In the context of the author portrait, the lamp may be understood as a symbol of divine illumination that inspired the writings of the saintly authors and of the spiritual wisdom that emanated from them to enlighten humankind. Yet, even though the lighting devices in these iconographic contexts were never meant to create a realistic setting, it may still be significant that a distinction was made with relative consistency between the types of glass lamps associated with the authors and those associated with the ciboria: it could reflect a comparable distinction between the type of lamp that would be used in domestic or secular contexts and the type common to ecclesiastical ones.

³⁵ See, for example, K. Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (London, 1977), pl. 35 (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, *Rabbula Gospels*, fol. 9v: closed-shaped oil lamp with a spout for the wick on a tall lampstand, both made of metal, next to the seated figure of St. John; 586).

³⁶ See also D. Buckton, ed., *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London, 1994), no. 147 (British Museum, Add. ms. 28815, fol. 76v: St. Luke; 10th c.); Bouras, “Byzantine Lighting Devices,” fig. 8 (n. 9 above; Geraki, Evangelistria, St. Luke, second half of 12th c.).

³⁷ See, for example, Gill, *Amorium*, 1:35–36, 131–33 (n. 18 above).

³⁸ *DOCat* 1, no. 103.

³⁹ On the date of this manuscript, see J. C. Anderson, “The Walters Praxapostolos and Liturgical Illustration,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Ετ.* 19 (1996–97): 18. I thank Prof. Sharon E. J. Gerstel for this reference.

⁴⁰ See G. Galavaris, “Some Aspects of Symbolic Use of Lights in the Eastern Church: Candles, Lamps and Ostrich Eggs,” *BMGS* 4 (1978): 69–78. On the “sleepless” bema lights see, for example, P. Gautier, “Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator,” *REB* 32 (1974): 37.140–141; 73.735; 81.865–866.

Fig. 7 Miniature, St. John with Prochoros. Mount Athos, Pantokrator monastery, cod. 234, fol. 43r.a, dated ca. 1150 (photo after S. Pelekanides et al., *Οι Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους: Εικονογραφημένα χειρόγραφα* [Athens, 1979], 3: fig. 244)



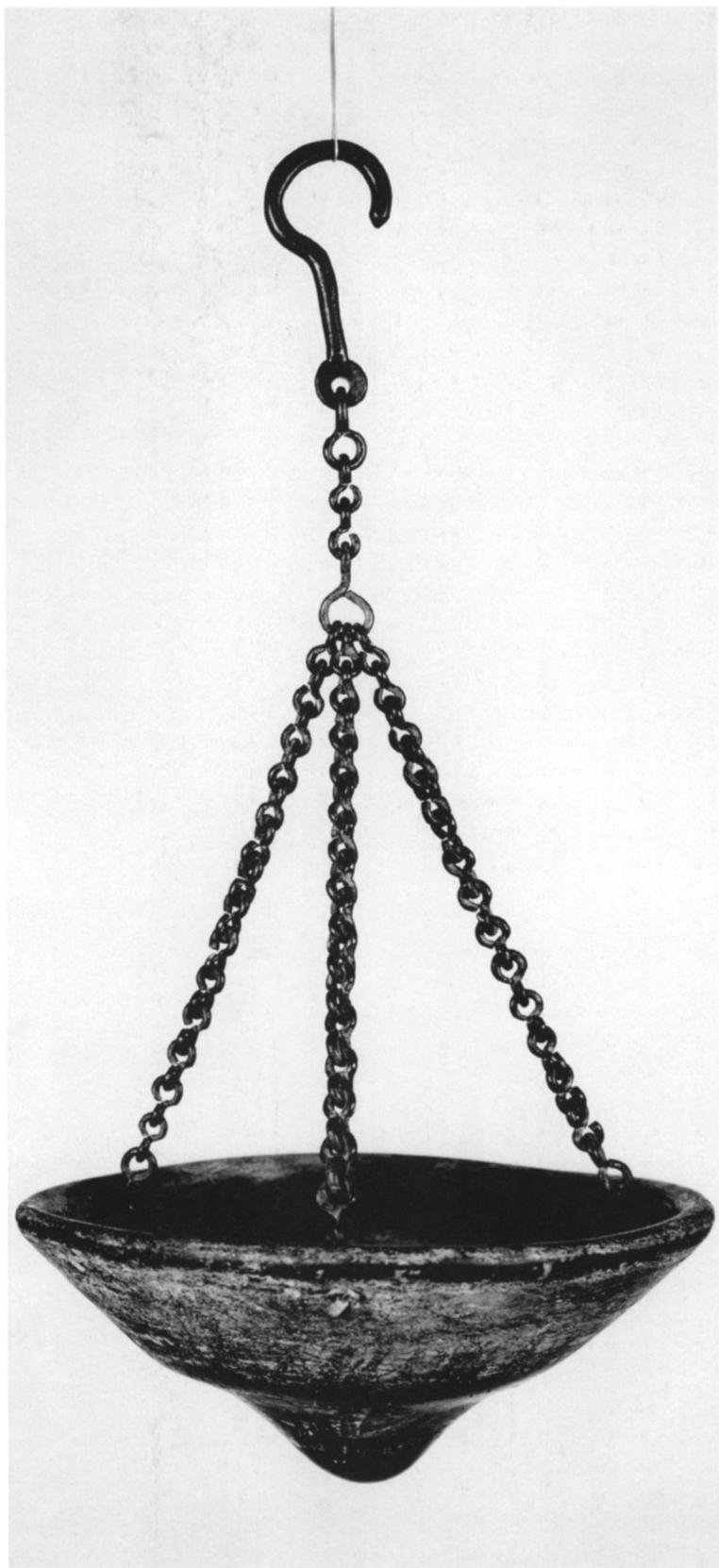


Fig. 8 Glass lamp. Washington, D.C.,
Dumbarton Oaks Collection, acc. no. 46.3
(photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks,
Washington, D.C.)

Ink Bottles and Inkwells

By far the most common type of glass receptacle reflected in Byzantine art is the ink bottle, which is included among the writing paraphernalia of saintly authors (figs. 7, 9, 10). The earliest medieval representations of such vessels known to me date to the tenth century. The ink bottle of St. Matthew in codex 43, fol. 10v, of the Stauroniketa monastery on Mount Athos is large, with a leather cord around its neck perhaps for suspension (fig. 9), as seen in a much later portrait of St. Mark in Sinait. gr. 179, fol. 84v (early 12th c.).⁴¹ The large size of the ink bottle in the Stauroniketa manuscript is exceptional. In later representations, containers of ink are considerably smaller and appear in a variety of shapes. Handleless flasks with globular body and cylindrical neck constitute the most common type. What appears to be a Late Byzantine development is the depiction of glass flasks with a single handle, as seen, for example, in the portrayal of St. Luke at the Protaton on Mount Athos, dated circa 1290 or 1300 (fig. 10). While, as a rule, the images of ink bottles appear to be conventional, the introduction of a novel feature in their depiction—the handle—might have been inspired by a handled type of ink bottle that came into use during the Late Byzantine period.⁴² The availability of small-sized glass flasks with a single handle in Byzantine lands at that time is attested by the discovery of one such vessel embedded in the masonry of the apse wall of the katholikon of the Blatandon monastery in Thessalonike. The handled flask is made of clear glass and is 11 cm high.⁴³

By contrast to ink bottles, glass inkwells are only rarely reflected in Byzantine art.⁴⁴ The example on the table of the evangelist Mark in codex 57, fol. 107v, of the National Library of Athens (3rd quarter of the 11th c.) is cylindrical and contains red ink (fig. 11). Given the “neological” character of this representation, the hypothesis that in this case the miniaturist depicted an actual object with which he was familiar is fairly plausible.

41 K. Weitzmann and G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, vol. 1, *From the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, 1990), color pl. XXa, fig. 432.

42 Cf. Gasparetto, “Note sulla vetraria,” 106–7 (n. 14 above).

43 I thank Mr. Anastasios Antonaras of the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessalonike, for kindly providing me information regarding this flask.

44 On the use of glass for the manufacture of inkwells in Byzantium, see E. Mioni, *Introduzione alla paleografia Greca* (Padua, 1973), 29. For Islamic glass inkwells, see Kröger, *Nishapur*, 176–78; Carboni, *Glass from Islamic Lands*, no. 33a–c (both n. 34 above).

Fig. 9 Miniature, St. Matthew. Mount Athos, Stauroniketa Monastery, cod. 43, fol. 10v, middle of 10th c. (photo courtesy of the Holy Monastery of Stauroniketa)

Fig. 10 Fresco, St. Luke, detail. Mount Athos, Protaton, ca. 1290 or ca. 1300 (photo: I. Djordjević)



Fig. 11 Miniature, St. Mark. Athens, National Library of Greece, cod. 57, fol. 107v, third quarter of 11th c. (photo: Christos Kolotouros, courtesy of the National Library of Greece)



Urine Flasks and Medicine Bottles

Iconographic contexts appropriate for the depiction of glass receptacles associated with medicinal practices—namely, medicine bottles and urine flasks—are limited, comprising mainly illuminations in medical manuscripts and portrayals of healer saints. In one of the marginal miniatures of the famous ninth-century *Sacra Parallelia* (Par. gr. 923, fol. 210r), a physician is portrayed grinding medicine with mortar and pestle (fig. 12). On the two lower shelves of the cupboard behind him are four vessels (two tall bowls and two bottles with a splayed foot), bluish white in color, which, in all probability, portray glass containers for medicaments.⁴⁵ This is the earliest depiction of glass vessels in Middle Byzantine art that I have come across. There is a continuing discussion about the provenance of the manuscript. Constantinople, South Italy, and Palestine, which was under Muslim rule in the ninth century, have all been proposed as possible places of origin for the work on the basis of admittedly tenuous stylistic and historical arguments.⁴⁶ Until the question of the manuscript's provenance is satisfactorily resolved, the image in the *Sacra Parallelia* may not be used with confidence as a source on the shape of Middle Byzantine medicinal bottles or, for that matter, as evidence for glassmaking in Byzantine lands in the ninth century.

By far the best-known representation of a doctor at work is found in the depiction of a physician's office in a fourteenth-century copy of the thirteenth-century *Book of Antidotes* of Nicholas Myrepsos (Par. gr. 2243, fol. 10v; fig. 13).⁴⁷ This manuscript was created in Athens for a Greek patron—who was, predictably enough, a doctor—when Attica was under Catalan rule. To the left of the miniature the physician is examining the contents of a urine flask. The doctor's assistant, standing between two patients, holds a peculiar container, perhaps the carrier basket for the flask. To the right, a pharmacist is holding up a half-open casket containing minuscule medicinal vials, while in the background behind him is a cupboard full of pharmaceutical containers; those in the middle shelf are apparently made of glass. The urine flask represented in this miniature, with its bulging body and slightly contracted neck, belongs to a type that may be identified as Western since it is commonly encountered in medieval Western medical illustrations.⁴⁸ In the context of fourteenth-century Athens, it is possible that comparable Western-looking urine flasks were actually in use. However, there is pictorial evidence to suggest that Byzantine proper urine flasks had a different shape. In a fifteenth-century copy of the Middle Byzantine treatise by Theophilos Protospatharios *On Urines*, executed in Constantinople (Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, ms. 3632, fol. 51r), the represented urine flasks are cylindrical with straight walls and a flat base (fig. 14).⁴⁹ They bring to mind the beakerlike flasks prescribed in the fourteenth century by the Byzantine court physician John Aktouarios (d. after 1328) as the most appropriate for conducting uroscopy.⁵⁰

48 See, for example, L. MacKinney, *Medical Illustrations in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 1965), 10, 11–14, figs. 6–8, 14–15.

49 Ibid., 11; Th. Diamantopoulos, “Εικονογραφήσεις βυζαντινών ιατρικών χειρογράφων,” in *Iatriká βυζαντινά χειρόγραφα*, ed. Th. Diamantopoulos (Athens, 1995), 114–15.

50 I. L. Ideler, ed., *Physici et medici graeci minores* (Berlin, 1841; repr. Amsterdam, 1963), 1:33. I owe this reference to Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot, whom I here thank.

Fig. 12 Miniature, physician grinding medicine. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, cod. gr. 923, fol. 210r, dated 9th c. (photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France)



45 K. Weitzmann, *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallelia: Parisinus Graecus 923* (Princeton, N.J., 1979), 240, pl. CL, 695. On the date of the manuscript, which was probably created after the end of Iconoclasm, see J. Osborne, “A Note on the Date of the *Sacra Parallelia* (Parisinus graecus 923),” *Byzantion* 51.1 (1981): 316–17.

46 A. Grabar, *Les manuscrits grecs énigmatiques de provenance italienne (IXe–XIe siècles)* (Paris, 1972), 21–24; Weitzmann, *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallelia*, reviewed by R. Cormack, *Burlington Magazine* 123, 936 (1981): 170–72, C. Mango, *AntJ* 62.1 (1982): 161–63; J. Lowden, *Art International* 26.4 (1983): 57–58. I thank Prof. Jeffrey C. Anderson for sharing his views on the problem of the provenance of the Parisian manuscript with me and for providing bibliographical references.

47 J. Durand et al., eds., *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris, 1992), no. 350.



Fig. 13 Miniature, physician's office. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, cod. gr. 2243, fol. 10v, dated 14th c. (photo courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France)



Fig. 14 Miniature, Theophilos Protopatharios conducting uroscopy and a uroscopy chart. Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, ms. 3632, fol. 51r, dated 15th c. (photo by permission of the Biblioteca Universitaria, Bologna)

Medicinal flasks represented in medical illustrations belong, as a rule, to the same type with the cylindrical neck and the globular body (fig. 13).⁵¹ Medicinal flasks that appear in the hands of healer saints evidence greater variety in shape, although they are not necessarily less generic. They are associated particularly with the portrayal of St. Anastasia Pharmakolytria and St. Cyrus of Egypt.⁵² The glass flask in the hands of St. Anastasia, as seen, for example, in a late thirteenth-century fresco at Asinou in Cyprus (fig. 15), may be understood as the container of antidote to poison and, consequently, a visual guarantee of the efficacy of the saint surnamed “the poison curer.” In appearance, this particular vessel is reminiscent of a toilet flask discovered in a twelfth-century funerary context at Sarachane in Constantinople (preserved height: 12.2 cm).⁵³ Regarding St. Cyrus, I could not find any indication in his *Life* or his *Miracles* as to why he should be attributed the medicinal flask instead of the more traditional lancet of doctor saints. All in all, while these representations may be a reliable indication that glass containers for pharmaceutical substances were common items in the medieval period, they seem to be less reliable witnesses as to the actual shapes of these vessels. It is worth noting that during the excavation of a pharmacy at Corinth, dated to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century—that is, when the city was under Frankish rule—the glass bottles that came to light belong to a type that has a long neck with a cut-out bulge at its base and a bulbous body.⁵⁴ To my knowledge, this type of bottle does not appear in Byzantine medical illustrations or portrayals of doctor saints.



⁵¹ See also Diamantopoulos, “Εικονογραφήσεις,” 113–14, fig. 38.

⁵² See, selectively, D. Vojvodić, “Kult i ikonografija svete Anastasije Farmakolitrije u zemljama vizantijskog kulturnog kruga,” *Zograf* 21 (1990): 31–40; A. Antonaras, “Venetian Glass Pilgrim Vessels found in Thessalonica,” in *Annales du 15e congrès de l’Association internationale pour l’histoire du verre* (New York, 2001), 201, fig. 4; W. F. Volbach et al., *Il tesoro di San Marco: La Pala d’oro* (Florence, 1965), pl. LVIII.161; St. Pelekanides, *Καστοριά*, vol. 1, *Βυζαντινά τοιχογραφία: Πλίναχες* (Thessalonike, 1953), pl. 22b (church of the Holy Anargyroi; ca. 1180); N. B. Drandakes, *Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες της Μέσα Μάνης* (Athens, 1995), pl. 51 (Episkope, ca. 1200); M. Chatzedakes and I. Bitha, *Ευρετήριο βυζαντινών τοιχογραφιών Ελλάδος: Κύθηρα* (Athens, 1997), 180, fig. 26 (Pourko, St. Demetrios, north church; 1287 or 1302).

⁵³ Hayes, *Excavations at Sarachane*, 405 no. 76 and pl. 52a (n. 18 above).

⁵⁴ C. K. Williams II and O. H. Zervos, “Frankish Corinth: 1991,” *Hesperia* 61.2 (1992): 149 no. 8, pl. 37; eidem, “Frankish Corinth: 1993,” *Hesperia* 63.1 (1994), 16.

Fig. 15 Fresco, St. Anastasia Pharmakolytria and female donor, late 13th c.; Asinou, church of Panagia Phorbiotissa (photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.)

Perfume Bottles

In the early fourteenth-century representation of the Birth of the Virgin at the Chora monastery in Constantinople (fig. 3), one of the visiting women offers St. Anna a plain fusiform perfume flask, made apparently of blue glass. To judge by finds of perfume bottles in Late Byzantine archaeological contexts throughout Greece, blue glass appears to have been popular for the manufacture of such items.⁵⁵ However, the shape of the extant examples, with a tall, narrow neck and a globular or ovoid body, differs from the one in the Constantinopolitan mosaic. The closest parallel I was able to locate for the Chora depiction is a twelfth-century flask made of light olive-green glass, of possible Levantine or Venetian origin, that was discovered in a funerary context during the Saracchane excavation (height: ca. 18.3 cm).⁵⁶ Regarding the shape, other comparanda include Islamic “spearlike” kohl bottles with marvered decoration, which are dated commonly to the eleventh through the thirteenth century.⁵⁷ At present it is not possible to determine whether the Chora flask reflects products of local workshops or foreign imports. Still, a particularly interesting feature in this Late Byzantine representation of the Birth of the Virgin is the actual inclusion of a glass object among the gifts that are presented to St. Anna.⁵⁸ Glass objects also appear in a small number of other (later) fourteenth-century depictions of the same scene.⁵⁹ By contrast, in Middle Byzantine representations, St. Anna was presented usually with platters of food and the occasional ceramic (?) bottle but not, to my knowledge, with glass vessels.⁶⁰ It is, therefore, enticing to regard the later representations as an indication that luxury glass objects had become more readily available in the Balkans during the Late Byzantine period, yet not so common as to detract from their value as items suitable to be presented as gifts on special occasions. Such an assumption could provide glass scholars interested in the social and cultural aspects of the use of glass in Late Byzantine society with a working hypothesis to be tested against the archaeological evidence.⁶¹

55 M. Chatzedakes, *Μυστράς: Η μεσαιωνική πολιτεία και το κάστρο; Οδηγός* (Athens, 1989), fig. 45 (Mistra, Peribleptos; third quarter of the 14th century); V. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslavien*, trans. A. Hamm (Munich, 1976), pl. XXXV (Patriarchate of Peć, church of St. Demetrios; ca. 1345). The perfume bottle represented at Peć has a shape similar to that of the Chora example. Furthermore it is adorned with white and blue zigzag lines that bring to mind the marvered decoration of extant medieval glass vessels produced in the Islamic East. On Islamic marvered glass see, selectively, A. von Saldern, “Early Islamic Glass in the Near East: Problems of Chronology and Provenances,” in *Annales du 13e congrès de l’Association internationale pour l’histoire du verre* (Lochem, 1996), 236–38; see also above, n. 57.

56 See, for example, N. Chatzidakis, *Byzantine Mosaics*, trans. A. Doumas (Athens, 1994), pl. 100 (Daphni, late 11th c.); Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken*, pl. VII (Nerezi, 1164). Although the bottle represented in the Birth of the Virgin at Nerezi is reminiscent in shape of the 12th- or 13th-century glass bottles with enameled and gilt decoration from Paphos, Corinth, and elsewhere (see below), its color scheme and decoration seem to reflect those of contemporary fine sgraffito-ware ceramics. Admittedly no ceramic bottles of comparable shape have been recovered from Middle Byzantine archaeological contexts.

57 There are, in fact, references to imports of Venetian glass to Byzantine lands, and Constantinople in particular, dating from the second half of the 13th century onward; see A. E. Laiou, “Venice as a Centre of Trade and of Artistic Production in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Il medio oriente e l’occidente nell’arte del XIII secolo: Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale di Storia*

55 See, for example, Papanikola-Bakirtze, ed., *Καθημερινή ζωή*, nos. 813, 814, 816–18 (all recovered from funerary contexts; n. 19 above).

56 Hayes, *Excavations at Saracchane*, 401, 404–5 no. 75, fig. 153.

57 See, for example, Carboni, *Glass from Islamic Lands*, no. 80a–c; Carboni and Whitehouse, *Glass of the Sultans*, no. 55 (both n. 34 above).

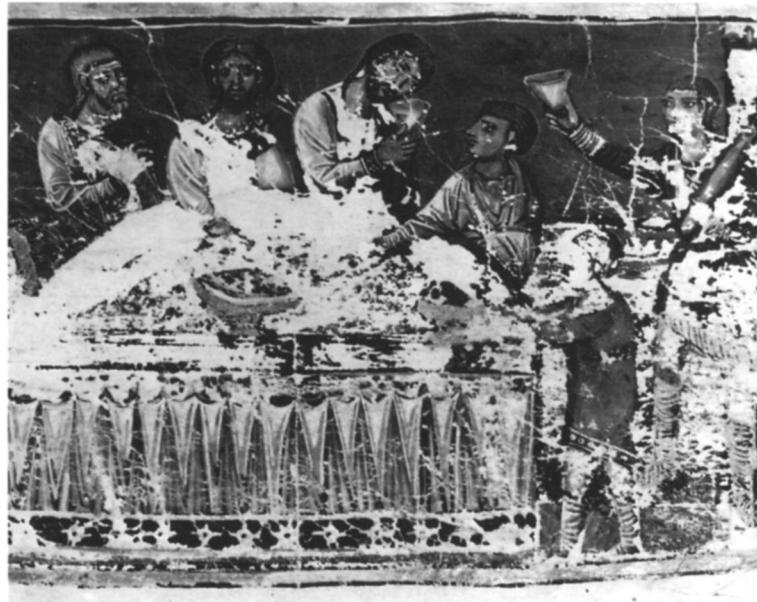
58 The woman behind the one with the perfume bottle is shown carrying a much larger dark blue bottle adorned with two broad golden bands on its body. Because of its color, this vessel too could be perceived as a glass object.

dell’Arte, Bologna 1979, ed. H. Belting (Bologna, 1982), 2:15, 18–19; C. Maltezou, “Un artisan verrier crétois à Venise,” in *Chemins d’outre-mer: Études d’histoire sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, Byzantina Sorbonensis 20, ed. D. Coulon et al. (Paris, 2004), 2:539. Interestingly enough, in 1437, the Venetian Giacomo Badoer, who resided in Constantinople at the time and was involved in the importation of glass vessels to the city, mentions that he set aside sixty imported glass items to offer as gifts to his friends: U. Dorini and T. Bertelé, eds., *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer* (Rome, 1956), 137. I owe all this information to Prof. David Jacoby, whom I here gratefully acknowledge.

Tableware

Glass serving and drinking vessels do not occur often in medieval Byzantine art. The earliest depiction of glass beakers in Middle Byzantine art known to me is in the Book of Job of the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (cod. gr. Z. 538, fol. 6v; 905), in a miniature depicting the sons of Job at supper (fig. 16). The represented beakers are conical, with sides tapering toward the base. According to Gasparetto, their shape is reminiscent of extant late antique examples recovered from northern Africa and the Danube basin.⁶² A similar beaker can be seen in a fourth-century fresco in the so-called tomb of Eustorgios at Thessalonike.⁶³ Given the similarity of the beakers depicted in the Marciana Job to late antique examples and the lack—at least for the moment—of comparable examples from medieval contexts, it is possible that the tenth-century miniaturist was reproducing a conventional iconographic type. Therefore, in the absence of other corroborative evidence, it would be unwise to admit these Middle Byzantine representations as proof that this particular type of beaker continued in use in Byzantine lands until the medieval period.

The tendency to expand the types of tableware represented in Byzantine art, evident from the late eleventh century onward,⁶⁴ is also apparent in the depiction of glassware, with the appearance of glass bottles, bowls, goblets, and beakers of various shapes in appropriate iconographic contexts. In a Constantinopolitan (?) Gospel book of the second half of the eleventh century now in the Biblioteca Palatina of Parma (cod. 5), in the unidentified scene below the Last Supper in folio 89v (preparation for the meal?), three bottles are represented, in all probability made of glass, standing on a table (fig. 17). The first bottle to the left is particularly interesting. With its tall cylindrical body and short neck, this vessel is reminiscent of the similarly shaped well-known bottles of enameled and gilt colored glass from Corinth, Paphos, Novogrudok, and Tarquinia (fig. 18).⁶⁵ Though the extant examples are dated usually to the twelfth or the thirteenth century, the eleventh-century depiction in the Parma manuscript suggests that comparable receptacles—at least, in form—could have been in use in Byzantium slightly earlier than what the available archaeological evidence would lead us to conclude.



62 "Note sulla vetraria," 110 (n. 14 above); cf. Gill, *Amorium*, 1:43–44 (nos. 96–97; n. 18 above), for two comparable beakers retrieved from a context that contained materials dated to the period from the 5th to the 7th century.

63 Papanikola-Bakirtze, ed., *Καθημερινή ζωή*, illustrated on pp. 532–33 (n. 19 above).

64 See Parani, *Reconstructing*, 242–43, 253 (n. 8 above); see also above, n. 11.

65 Gasparetto, "Note sulla vetraria," 108; see also Henderson and Mango, "Glass at Medieval Constantinople," fig. 8 (n. 13 above).

Fig. 16 Miniature, Sons of Job at supper. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, cod. gr. Z. 538 (= 540), fol. 6v, dated 905 (photo courtesy of Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia)

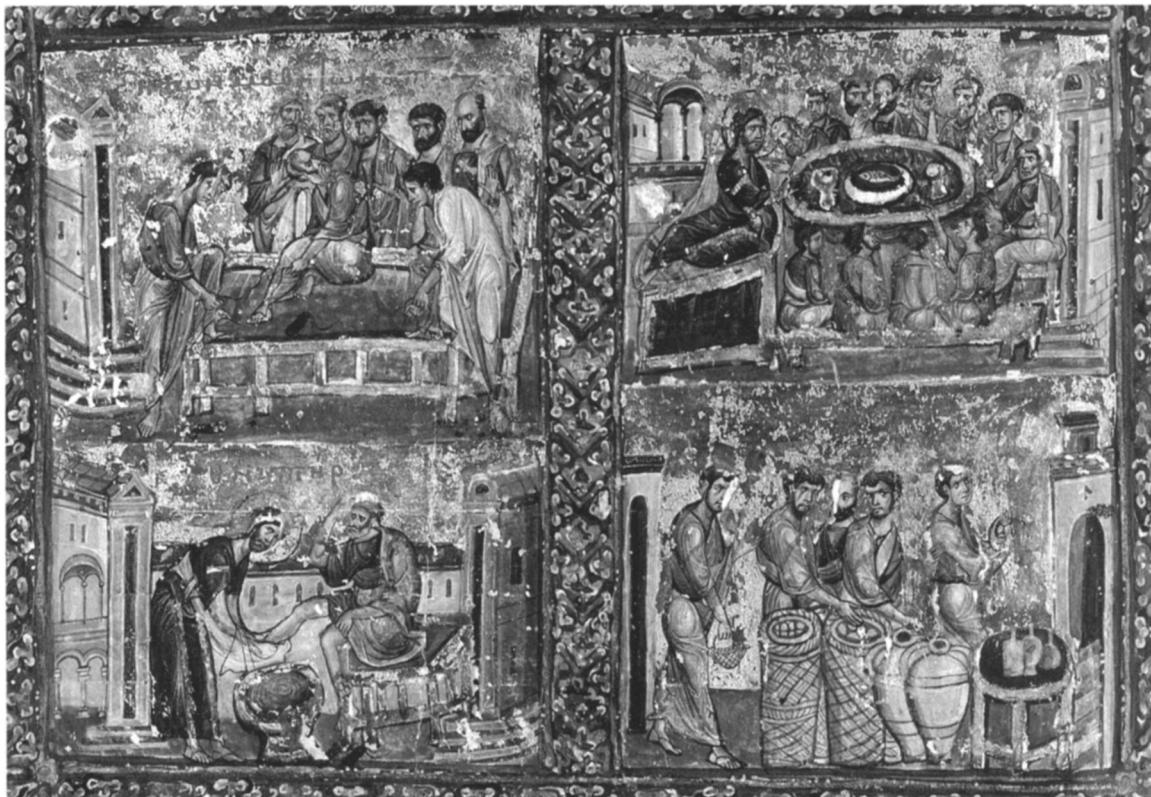


Fig. 17 Miniature, The Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, ms. Pal. 5, fol. 91v (ex 89v), detail, second half of 11th c. (photo courtesy of the Biblioteca Palatina, by permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali)

Fig. 18 Glass bottle. Paphos, Saranda Kolones excavation, inv. no. 503/1, late 12th c. (photo courtesy of Cyprus Museum, Nicosia)



Equally interesting are the reflections of glass vessels in the famous Gospel book Plut. VI.23 of the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence, which is of possible Constantinopolitan origin and is dated to circa 1100 on stylistic grounds. They comprise depictions of a bowl, a goblet, a bottle, and two beakers (figs. 19, 20).⁶⁶ To my knowledge, similar representations do not occur in other contemporary Byzantine works of art. I, therefore, believe that the miniaturist depicted these glass vessels either because he found their shapes (or, perhaps, their novelty?) appealing or because he wished to introduce some variety into his work.⁶⁷ The depiction of the bowl in folio 91r of Laur. Plut. VI.23 brings to mind the reference to a glass serving bowl and a glass platter in the will of abbot Sabas of Patmos dated to circa 1119.⁶⁸ As for the goblet represented on the table next to the bowl, this reflects what appears to have been quite a popular shape of glass drinking vessel in medieval Byzantium.⁶⁹ The tall beakers represented in folios 194v and 141r (figs. 19, 20) are comparable in shape to the enameled and gilt colored-glass examples from Paphos and Novogrudok, which are usually ascribed a twelfth-century date (fig. 21).⁷⁰ Finally, the unusual profile of the bottle depicted on the table in folio 141r (fig. 20) reflects that of bottle no. 782 in Davidson's catalogue (height: 10.5 cm) from the Agora South Center glass factory at Corinth (figs. 22–24).⁷¹ According to Davidson, bottle no. 782 was found along with numerous fragments of similar bottles, a fact that suggests manufacture in situ for the type.⁷²

69 Hayes, *Excavations at Saragiane*, 401, 403 (nos. 42–44), 404 (nos. 46–49, 57, 61, 74); Gill, *Amorium*, 1:38–43, 135–41 (both n. 18 above).

70 B. A. Shelkovnikov, "Russian Glass from the 11th to the 17th Century," *JGS* 8 (1966): 101–2, figs. 14–15; Megaw, "Gilt and Enamelled Glass," 89–90 (n. 18 above).

71 *Minor Objects*, no. 782 (n. 18 above).

72 *Ibid.*, 89, 119.

66 See also T. Velmans, *Le tétraévangile de la Laurentienne: Florence, Laur. VI. 23* (Paris, 1971), fig. 174 (fol. 91r).

67 Cf. comment by Velmans that, while examining the three hundred or so miniatures of the Laurenziana manuscript, she often detected a tendency to introduce picturesque details into the images, even though they were not required by the illustrated narrative; *ibid.*, 13–14.

68 MM 6:245. For the date, see N. Oikonomides, "The Contents of the Byzantine House from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century," *DOP* 44 (1990): 207.

Fig. 19 Miniature, Christ in the house of Lazarus (John 12:1–11). Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Plut. VI.23, fol. 194v, dated ca. 1100 (photo courtesy of Biblioteca Laurenziana, with the permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali)

Fig. 20 Miniature, Parables of the lost sheep and the woman with the ten pieces of silver (Luke 15:3–10). Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Plut. VI. 23, fol. 141r, dated ca. 1100 (photo courtesy of Biblioteca Laurenziana, with the permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali)



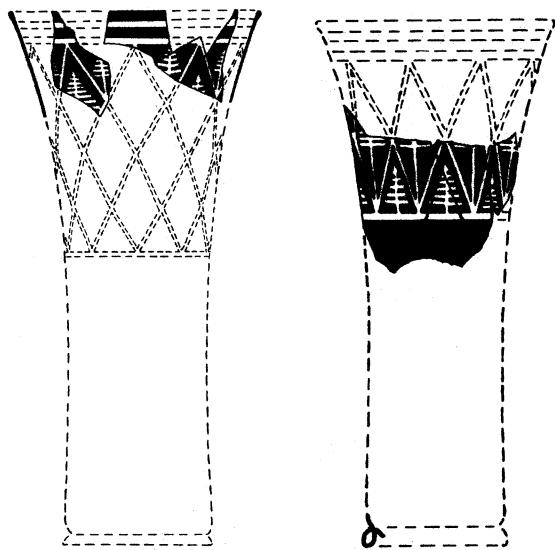
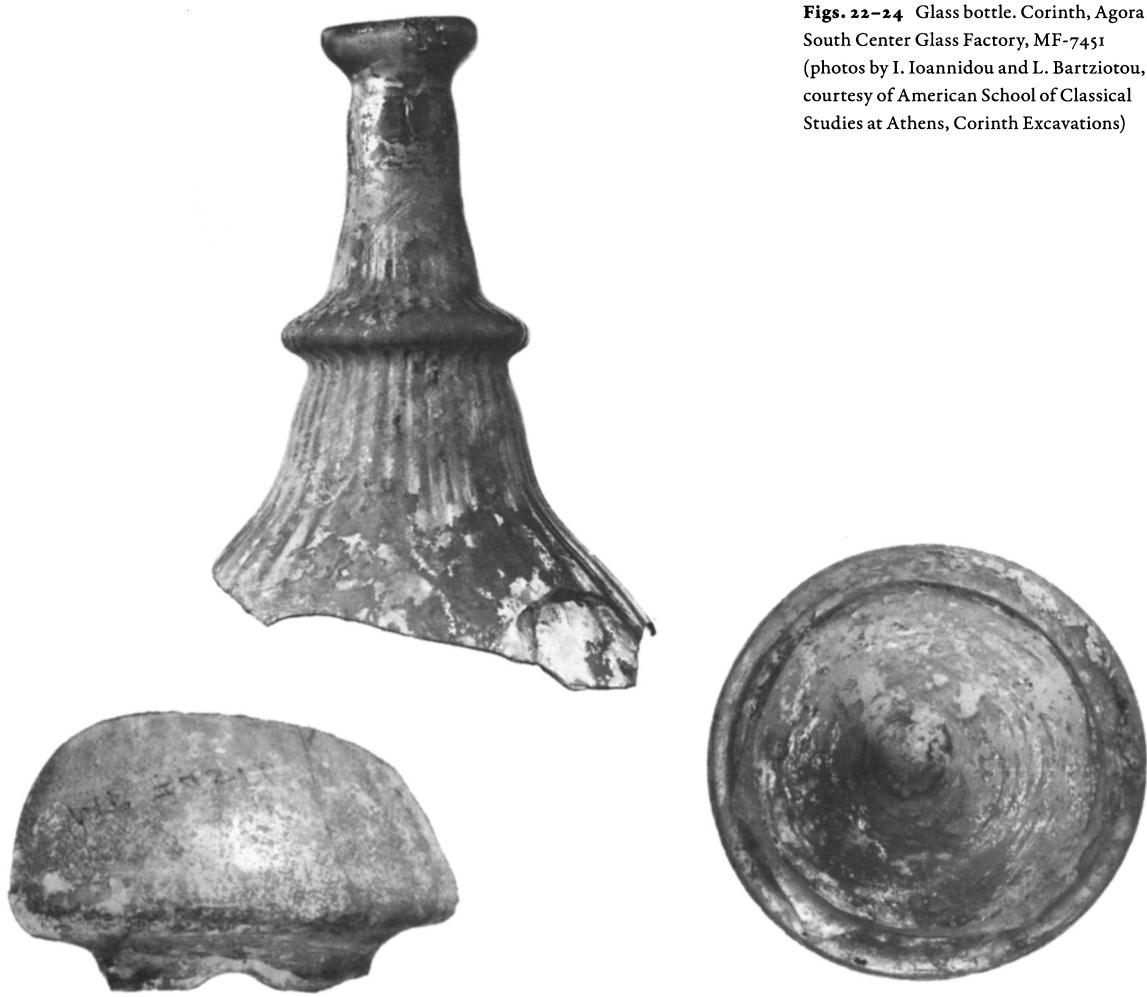


Fig. 21 Glass beakers. Paphos, Saranda Kolonnes excavation, inv. nos. 503/2, 503/3 (after A. H. S. Megaw, "More Gilt and Enamelled Glass from Cyprus," *JGS* 10 [1968]: 90, figs. 2-3)



Figs. 22-24 Glass bottle. Corinth, Agora South Center Glass Factory, MF-7451 (photos by I. Ioannidou and L. Bartziotou, courtesy of American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Corinth Excavations)

There is an ongoing debate concerning the time frame of the activity of the Agora South Center workshop. Davidson's view that it was active from the eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century was contested by D. Whitehouse, who suggested that, given the similarity of the Corinthian workshop's products to thirteenth- and fourteenth-century glass objects from Italy, its activity should be placed within the period of the Frankish occupation of Corinth, which began in 1210.⁷³ The unearthing of large amounts of glass similar to that commonly associated with the Agora South Center workshop from carefully excavated and securely dated Frankish layers at Corinth in the 1990s was seen as further support for Whitehouse's argument.⁷⁴ However, the type represented by bottle no. 782 is not included among the forms for which Italian parallels of the thirteenth and the fourteenth century have been adduced, nor, to my knowledge (based on published reports), is it attested in the recently excavated Frankish layers at Corinth. Now, the construction of the structures in the Agora South Center area of Corinth can be dated probably to the twelfth century, if not earlier, largely on the basis of finds of coins of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) embedded in the walls. Therefore the Agora South Center factory could have been established in the area sometime during the twelfth century.⁷⁵ Furthermore, although Whitehouse's proposition that this factory was active during the Frankish period appears to be correct on the face of the evidence put forward, there is no concrete proof to exclude the possibility that a glass workshop was already in operation on the premises during the twelfth century.⁷⁶ I would argue that the depiction of the glass bottle in the Laurentian Gospel book (fig. 20), so strikingly similar to Corinth no. 782 (figs. 22–24), could lend support for a late eleventh- or twelfth-century date for the type and, by extension, for the hypothesis that a glassmaking workshop was already established at the Agora South Center of Corinth—where such bottles were apparently produced—already in the twelfth century.⁷⁷

In the Late Byzantine period representations of glass tableware in iconographic contexts other than the Wedding at Cana occur only sporadically and seem, at first glance, to be conventional. One example comprises the wine bottle and beakers in the representation of the Heavenly Ladder of St. John Klimakos at Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos (1312) and the goblets and footed bowls on the table of the Last Supper in the Peribleptos at Mistra (third quarter of the 14th c.).⁷⁸ In Late Byzantine illustrations of the Miracle at Cana, one often encounters an unadorned glass beaker, with sides slightly tapering toward a flat base, in the hands of the governor of the wedding feast (see fig. 1). The frequent occurrence of this type and its plain, nondistinctive appearance might imply that it was no more than an artistic convention repeated by

⁷⁶ Cf. Williams, "Frankish Corinth," 431: "The conclusion that best explains the [archaeological] evidence is that glass-blowers practiced their art in the 12th-century Byzantine neighborhood and later the Frankish glass-blowers used the same area, even possibly reusing some of the existing architecture as part of their glass-blowing center."

⁷⁷ The careful reexamination of the precise context from which fragments of no. 782-type bottles were recovered and of the materials with which they were

associated would be the next, necessary step for substantiating this hypothesis. However, such an investigation goes beyond the scope of the present article and will not be undertaken here.

⁷⁸ E. Tsigaridas, "The Mosaics and the Byzantine Wall-Paintings," in *The Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi: Tradition, History, Art* (Mount Athos, 1998), 1: fig. 231; P. Kalamara and A. Mexia, eds., *The City of Mystras*, Mystras, August 2001–January 2002 (Athens, 2001), fig. 109.

⁷³ G. R. Davidson, "A Medieval Glass-Factory at Corinth," *AJA* 44.3 (1940): 297–324; *ibidem*, *Minor Objects*, 83; G. Davidson-Weinberg, "A Medieval Mystery: Byzantine Glass Production," *JGS* 17 (1975): 127–41; D. Whitehouse, "Glassmaking at Corinth: A Reassessment," in *Ateliers de verriers: de l'Antiquité à la période pré-industrielle*, eds. D. Foy and G. Sennequier (Rouen, 1991), 73–82; D. Whitehouse, "The Date of the 'Agora South Centre' Workshop at Corinth," *Archeologia Medievale* 20 (1993): 659–62. cf. Williams and Zervos, "Frankish Corinth: 1992," 22 n. 9 (n. 32 above); C. K. Williams II, "Frankish Corinth: An Overview," in *Corinth: The Centenary, 1896–1996*, ed. C. K. Williams II and N. Bookidis, vol. 20 of *Corinth* (Athens, 2003), 430–31.

⁷⁴ Whitehouse, "Date of the Workshop," 659–60; Williams, "Frankish Corinth," 431 n. 24 (with references to the relevant archaeological contexts and excavation reports).

⁷⁵ R. L. Scranton, *Mediaeval Architecture in the Central Area of Corinth*, vol. 16 of *Corinth* (Princeton, 1957), 68; cf. Whitehouse, "Glassmaking at Corinth," 77, 78. The 11th-century date for the structures suggested by Scranton on the basis of the coins should be treated with caution. A 12th-century date appears to be more likely; cf. Williams, "Frankish Corinth," 431: "Certainly from the evidence of the field notebooks the fill upon which the furnace was built appears to have been 12th century in date." Numismatic evidence suggests that commercial activity in the area of the glass factory goes back to the 9th century, but its exact nature has been obscured by the later structures; see D. M. Metcalf, "Corinth in the Ninth Century: The Numismatic Evidence," *Hesperia* 42 (1973): 207–10; cf. G. D. R. Sanders, "Corinth," in *Economic History of Byzantium*, 650, 652 (n. 13 above); *ibid.*, "Recent Developments in the Chronology of Byzantine Corinth," in *Corinth: The Centenary, 1996*, 397. The use of coins for dating purposes is not without its problems; see *ibid.*, 386–90. Here I take the opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Guy Sanders, Director of the Corinth Excavations, for alerting me to the various difficulties involved in the study of the material from the Agora South Center glass factory and for the generosity with which he answered my questions and shared his views with me.

Byzantine artists for the sake of convenience. In most cases this was probably true. However, the actual find of such a beaker made of colorless glass (height 6.8 cm) in a fourteenth-century funerary context from Thessalonike, is a timely reminder that not all iconographic topoi are necessarily devoid of contemporary relevance.⁷⁹

For more varied and detailed representations of glass tableware in Late Byzantine art, it is necessary to look to monuments created beyond the political frontiers of the empire, such as the medieval state of Serbia and the island of Crete, which was under Venetian rule at the time (fig. 25).⁸⁰ The reason is not clear. The bottle with the spirally ribbed neck of the so-called Manasija type, which is reflected in certain early fifteenth-century Serbian paintings, was also known in Byzantium during the Late Byzantine period.⁸¹ The prunted beaker, which occurs in fourteenth-century Cretan paintings, is a common find among the glass recovered from the South Center factory as well as from medieval contexts at Corinth that are securely dated to the period of the Frankish occupation of the city. Whitehouse considers the type to be of Italian derivation and attributes its occurrence at Corinth to the activity of Italian craftsmen installed

81 A. Antonaras, "Δύο βενετικά γυάλινα αγγεία από τη Θεσσαλονίκη," *Μουσείο Βυζαντινού Πολιτισμού, Θεσσαλονίκη 6* (1999): 30–36. I thank Prof. Gerstel for this reference.

79 Papanikola-Bakirtze, *Καθημερινή ζωή*, no. 821 (n. 19 above).

80 For Serbian examples, see above, n. 15. For prunted beakers represented in the church of the Panagia Kera at Kritsa in Crete see also M. Borboudakis, *Panaghia Kera: Byzantine Wall-paintings at Kritsa*, trans. A. Doumas (Athens, n.d.), fig. 31; St. Papadake-Ökland, "Η Κερά της Κριτσάς. Παρατηρήσεις στή χρονολόγηση τών τοιχογραφιών της," *Ἄρχ. Δελτ.* 22 (1967): A.1: 96; M. Vasilakis-Mavrakakis, "Western Influences on the Fourteenth Century Art of Crete," in *XV CEB* (Vienna, 1982), 2.5:303. For a probable representation of a beaker with mold-blown ribs in the same Cretan church, see Borboudakis, *Panaghia Kera*, fig. 46. I am grateful to Prof. Sharon E. J. Gerstel for bringing the Cretan representations to my attention and for providing me with the relevant bibliographical references.

Fig. 25 Fresco, Last Supper. Kritsa (Crete), church of Panagia Kera, 14th c. (photo: 13th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Ministry of Culture–Archaeological Receipts Fund, Greece)



there after 1210.⁸² As yet it is unclear how widespread the use of the prunted beaker was in areas still under Byzantine control during the Late Byzantine period.⁸³ It seems rash to interpret the absence of representations of such glass vessels in monuments created in Byzantine lands as an indication that the use of comparable objects was less common there. I am more inclined to attribute the difference in artistic treatment of representations of glass serving and drinking vessels in Serbian and Cretan monuments to the impact of western artistic traditions on the works of art in question. Recall that Byzantine artists did not usually reproduce the decoration of glass vessels even though the use of ornamented glassware is well attested in the archaeological evidence from Byzantine sites.

For the most part, the occurrence of vessels made of glass, rather than some other material, in Byzantine religious iconography does not appear to have been motivated by symbolic considerations, as was sometimes the case in western art.⁸⁴ The only possible exception seems to be the introduction of glass lamps into portrayals of saintly authors. Here the property of glass to receive and disseminate light despite being non-self-luminous might have influenced the choice of material: glass lamps could have alluded symbolically to the author saints as recipients of divine wisdom, which they then disseminated through their writings.⁸⁵ A second property of glass, transparency, might have determined the choice of material in yet a second context, namely the depiction of a glass beaker in representations of the Wedding at Cana. In this case, however, the preference for glass was probably prompted by iconographic criteria rather than symbolic considerations: the transparent glass enabled the beholder to see the miraculously transformed wine in the beaker—to see and thus believe in the actuality of Christ's miracle. In all other cases the occurrence of glass in Byzantine religious artistic contexts does not appear to have been motivated by any overriding iconographic necessity. It may, therefore, attest to the popularity of this material for the manufacture of particular categories of receptacles for liquids from the tenth and, especially, the eleventh century onward.

Admittedly, regarding the typology of the vessels, artistic representations often do little more than confirm the archaeological evidence. However, as to depicted objects unattested in the archaeological record, the images—if they are detailed and consistent enough—could not only predict future discoveries from Byzantine sites but also motivate reexamination of extant materials to detect fragments that have so far escaped identification or have been misidentified. As for questions of provenance, while depictions of glass objects can and do affirm the occurrence of particular types in Byzantine lands, their usefulness is limited in investigations into the origins of a new form or its geographical distribution. As we have seen, the artistic evidence can prove more informative in determining chronology. True, it is impossible to calculate accurately the time that separates the adoption of a new type of glass object in real life from its first reflection in art. Nor is it safe to assume that the continuous occurrence of a type in pictorial contexts implies similar continuity in its daily use. Still, innovative representations of glass objects, that is, representations of vessels that do not occur in works of art earlier than the monuments considered and, consequently, cannot be dismissed as conventional artistic forms, may serve as general chronological indicators. Such representations of glass vessels in securely dated artistic works can help date extant examples not yet dated securely. Furthermore the occurrence of a particular form in an artistic context earlier than the first attestation of the same in the archaeological record could justify

82 "Glassmaking at Corinth," esp. 75, 76–77, 78 (n. 73 above); Williams and Zervos, "Frankish Corinth: 1992," 26–28, 34 (n. 32 above). For the presence in Crete of glass craftsmen from Murano during the first half of the 14th century, see V. Han and L. Zecchin, "Presenze balcaniche a Murano e presenze muranesi nei Balcani," *Balcanica* 6 (1975): 80–82.

83 At Sarayhane, Constantinople, this type of beaker is attested only by a single, small fragment that was retrieved from a mixed deposit with materials dating down to the 12th century; cf. Hayes, *Excavations at Sarayhane*, 404 no. 68 (n. 18 above). Fragments of prunted beakers have also been unearthed from a number of sites in northern Greece, as reported by A. Antonaras, "Old and Recent Finds of Byzantine Glass from Northern Greece," oral communication at the Workshop on Byzantine Glass, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., 16 November 2002.

84 The reference is to the glass vessel with light streaming through it that was sometimes introduced into western representations of the Annunciation as an allusion to the conception of Christ, his "passing through" Mary without destroying her virginity; see McCray, *Glassmaking in Venice*, 6 (n. 14 above). While the analogy between light passing through glass and the virginal conception appears to have been known in Byzantium during late antiquity, it did not lead to a comparable iconographic development in the East; see N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations* (Leiden, 2003), 281.

85 Cf. comparisons in Byzantine literature between glass and angelic beings, the latter as vessels that reflect the divine light and are filled with holiness, not in their own right, but because it was granted to them by God. See John Geometres, *Carmina varia*, no. 76, PG 106:938A; E. Voordeckers and F. Tinnefeld, eds., *Iohannis Cantacuzeni Refutationes duae Prochori Cydonii et Disputatio cum Paulo patriarcha latino epistulis septem tradita* (Turnhout, 1987), 89 (Refut. 1, 58:20–28). I thank Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot for both these references.

pushing back the time limits of the type in question. Finally, the examination of artistic representations may prove surprisingly enlightening in visualizing the manner and setting in which glass objects were used and in trying to define the social context of their use in medieval Byzantium. Byzantine art, I would argue, when approached with a critical awareness of both its limitations and its potential in “archaeological” investigations, can prove valuable in the study of Byzantine glass at many different levels of scholarly inquiry, and it is therefore well worth exploring systematically.

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The present article constitutes an expanded version of the communication presented at the workshop. I would like to thank the organizers, Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot and Dr. David Whitehouse, for inviting me to participate and to contribute to the publication of selected papers from the workshop’s proceedings. I would also like to express my thanks to Dr. Marlia Mundell Mango and Mr. Anastasios Antonaras for their willing and valuable advice on various aspects of this study. The research for the present work was made possible by the generous support of the Hannah Seeger Davis Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship at the Program in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University (2002–3), which I here gratefully acknowledge.